



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



GOVERNOR AND LT. GOVERNOR VISIT NEW VETERANS HOME CONSTRUCTION SITE

Last week, State Veterans Home Superintendent Brad Richardson and Director of Operations Randall Meyers had the opportunity to provide Governor Daugaard and Lt. Governor Michels with a tour of the construction site for the new facility. In addition, they saw the concrete work that is being done on the new BIOMASS Heating Plant.

The Governor and Lt. Governor also toured the State Cemetery and



buildings one and two on campus. This afforded the Governor a first-hand view of the current rooming conditions for veterans.

Of course, as with any visit, the Governor and Lt. Governor took this opportunity to visit with veterans and to thank them for their service.

"We were both incredibly impressed



by the construction team and the progress," said Lt. Gov. Michels. "This will be a tribute to our veterans for many generations to come."



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VABHHCS TO HOST VETERAN STAND DOWN

The Veterans Affairs Black Hills Health Care System (VABHHCS) will host a Veteran Stand Down on September 22, 2014. The event is open to all veterans and their families from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm at the Elementary School Gym in Pine Ridge.

The focus of the Stand Down is to reach out to veterans who are homeless or at-risk for homelessness. "Veterans will be able to access a broad range of specialized resources and services aimed at breaking the destructive cycle of homelessness", said Bill Fahrenbruck, health care coordinator for Homeless Veterans, VABHHCS, "This event is a great opportunity to connect veterans to the services and the benefits they've earned and deserve."

The Stand Down is a collaborative effort between VABHHCS, the Shannon County Veterans Service Officer, Oglala Sioux Tribe Veterans Service Officer, Oglala Sioux Tribe Partnership For Housing, Inc., South Dakota Department of Labor, South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Supportive Services for Veterans and their Families, Rapid City Vet Center/Mobile Vet Center, and Volunteers of America.

Personal items such as cold-weather jackets, sleeping bags, blankets, duffel bags, and hygiene products will be available to veterans. Light snacks will be served during the event and veterans are welcome to attend a lunch provided by the Pine Ridge School Cafeteria. VABHHCS staff will provide basic medical screenings and health education. In addition, VA staff representing a variety of special programs will be available to hear issues, answer questions, and provide information on VA benefits, programs, and health care enrollment opportunities. Veterans will also be able to make future health care appointments at VABHHCS. All veterans are welcome to attend and there is no charge for any of the services provided. Veterans who have not previously enrolled with the VA are requested to bring a copy of their military discharge papers, DD 214, to the Stand Down.

NEW VSOS AT SHANNON AND FALL RIVER

Fall River County Commissioners have selected Dan Cullen as their new county veterans service officer. Dan replaces Wendy Weakland.

Dan's office hours are 8:00 am—4:30 pm (MT) Monday—Friday and his email address is: fallriver-cvso@gmail.com.

Shannon County Commissioners have selected Denver American Horse as their new county veterans service officer. Denver replaces Lynette Quinsatt.

Denver's office hours are 8:00 am—4:30 pm (MT) Monday and Tuesdays and 8:00 am—12:00 noon on Wednesdays. His email address is: bow@goldenwest.net.

Both Dan and Denver were able to join us at the Benefit School and were able to network with VSO colleagues.

Please welcome Dan and Denver to the veteran network.



SDDVA STAFF PARTICIPATE IN SD HEALTH CARE CONFERENCE

Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home Superintendent Brad Richardson, Director of Operations Randall Meyers, Business Manager Andrea Kramer and Assistant Director of Nursing Susan Wilcox represented the Department of Veterans Affairs at the South Dakota Health Care Association Conference in Sioux Falls this week.

In addition to participating in the training and obtaining educational credits, Richardson and his staff hosted a booth and promoted the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.

The conference theme, "Reflecting on the Past and Looking to the Future," aligned with staff's message for the State Veterans Home. We have a great legacy of taking care of South Dakota's veterans and we are anxiously waiting to move our heroes into their new home. "Our future is bright," said Superintendent Richardson. "The new home provides not only a new facility, but a new venue for how we provide services to our heroes!"



South Dakota
Health Care Association



SDDVA STAFF ATTEND SFVAHCS TOWN HALL MEETING

SDDVA Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard and Program Manager Heather Henderson attended the SFVAHCS Town Hall Meeting last week in Sioux Falls.

Conducted by the VA Regional Office, the meeting focused on VBA benefits. Attendees shared concerns they have with the VA and the Department of Labor. Some participants suggested that the VA launch a national outreach campaign to educate veterans on the benefits available to them.



VA TO HOLD INDUSTRY DAY TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF VETERANS CHOICE ACT

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced a next step in the process of implementing the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 that allows for increased veterans access to, and eligibility for, non-VA health care.

As part of the Veterans Choice Act implementation process, the VA will host an **"Industry Day,"** to seek input on how best to provide administrative support in the process of issuing Veteran Choice Cards, a provision of the legislation. The VA is quickly working to implement the legislation according to the timeline set in law, and looking to industry to assist.

"We are committed to providing veterans with the timely care they have earned and deserved," said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. "We look forward to the opportunity to partner with the private sector to implement this new law and provide veterans with a customer service experience that meets their needs."

"Industry Day" was held on Wednesday, September 17, 2014, at the Denver Acquisition and Logistic Center; the arm of VA that performs supply chain management for VA and other Government Agencies. The VA looks forward to the opportunity to involve industry in implementing this important piece of legislation.

Working with Congress, veterans service Organizations, and other stakeholders, the VA has additionally taken steps to implement this legislation, including:

- Establishing a Program Management office to oversee planning and implementation of the legislation across the Department.
- Putting in place the mechanisms to execute the outlined facilities with the authorization provided to carry out major medical facility leases.
- Working through the contracting process to extend the pilot program called Project ARCH to ensure the continued expanded access for veterans in rural areas provided by that program.

For additional information regarding industry day please visit [this link](#).

SD VETERANS COMMISSION TO MEET

The South Dakota Veterans Commission will meet on the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home campus in Hot Springs on Wednesday, October 8, from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm (MT).

Commissioners will hear reports from VA Director's Darwin Goodspeed and Steven DiStasio, the South Dakota Veterans Council, the Vet Centers, tribal and national cemetery directors and leaders from the veterans court programs.

SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman, Deputy Secretary Pollard and Superintendent Richardson will be updating the Commission on department activities and programs, as well as updates on federal stats.

Commissioners will also be given a tour of the veterans home construction project.

**SOUTH DAKOTA
VETERANS
COMMISSION**

SD GUARD UNIT WINS NATIONAL AWARD, ADVANCES TO DOD COMPETITION

The U.S. Army awarded the South Dakota Army National Guard's Forward Support Company, 153rd Engineer Battalion, the Army Award for Maintenance Excellence during a ceremony at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Sept. 10.

The AAME recognizes Army activities and units that demonstrate excellence in maintenance operations to include Reserve and National Guard units.

The Parkston, South Dakota-based FSC was among 36 logistics units honored at the annual Chief of Staff of the Army Combined Logistics Excellence Award ceremony. The FSC earned the AAME in the small maintenance category (10-100 personnel).

The primary purpose of the FSC is to provide direct combat sustainment support for a maneuver battalion.

"It is with great honor that the FSC accepts this prestigious maintenance award," said Capt. Joshua Lien, FSC commander. "To be named the best National Guard Company in the small maintenance category is a true honor for our soldiers."

Lien said it took a collective effort from each soldier in the company to win the national award.

"It is simply a continuation of hard work, dedication and motivation from each soldier in our ranks to be among the best in our field of expertise," said Lien.

After submitting a 30-page document highlighting the FSC's accomplishments in the past year, the Headquarters, Department of the Army selected the unit for an in-depth onsite inspection to evaluate their maintenance related activities.

Following the inspection, the FSC scored higher than 16 National Guard units to win the AAME and will now represent the U.S. Army for the chance to earn the Phoenix Award, the highest maintenance award given by the Department of Defense.

1st Lt. Shane Skinner, FSC platoon leader, said they will continue to maintain high standards of operation to compete against field-level maintenance units from all five branches of the DoD.

"We will keep a competitive mindset, avoid complacency and, most importantly, continue the level of support that our customer units deserve and have come to expect," said Skinner. "We are honored to be counted amongst units of excellence in the maintenance world, and we are proud to represent the state of South Dakota and the Army National Guard."



OLIVA SPEAKS AT SDCCA/SDCOA CONFERENCE

SDDVA Program Manager Steve Oliva addressed county commissioners and officials at their annual convention in Pierre.

During his presentation, Oliva outlined all federal and state benefits that are available to veterans and their families. He provided design views of the new State Veterans Home that is being constructed.

At the conclusion of his presentation, Oliva thanked the counties for their support of Operation RAV. He reviewed some of the success stories that we have seen due to Operation RAV and updated the group on how many counties have completed hosting their events and making calls to their veterans.

ZIMMERMAN IS KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT WATERTOWN APPRECIATION DAY

SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman was the keynote speaker at the Watertown Veterans and First Responders Appreciation Day at Stokes-Thomas Park on Lake Kampeska.

In addition the ESGR (Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve) made presentations to community leaders and a city proclamation commemorating the event was read.

In his remarks, Secretary Zimmerman thanked the community leaders for hosting this event and honoring these heroes. He thanked all first responders and veterans for their service to this great country. During his remarks Secretary Zimmerman shared the following quote from Rudy Giuliani, mayor of New York on Sept. 11, 2001 "The lesson of 9/11 is that America is truly exceptional. We withstood the worst attack of our history, intended by our enemies to destroy us. Instead, it drew us closer and made us more united. Our love for freedom and one another has given us a strength that surprised even ourselves. At the same time, it's a strength that must be guarded and nurtured. We must rediscover our unity. We must never forget what we witnessed on that day, both the in-

comprehensible face of pure evil and the depth of love and compassion."

In closing Zimmerman thanked the families of these heroes for serving their mission at home 24/7 in holding down the home front!



SD GUARDSMEN SUPPORT U.S., SOUTH KOREA MILITARY EXERCISE

The South Dakota Army National Guard's 115th Brigade Signal Company conducted their annual training supporting U.S. and South Korea military forces during the annual Ulchi Freedom Guardian exercise, Aug. 9-30.

Approximately 30,000 U.S. troops and 50,000 South Korean troops took part in this year's computer-simulation exercise that enhances the combat readiness of the Republic of Korea and U.S. supporting forces through combined and joint training.

Thirty-nine soldiers from the 115th based in Brookings, joined service members from all branches of the South Korean and U.S. military for the computerized command-and-control exercise designed to enhance readiness, protect the region and maintain stability on the Korean peninsula. The focus of the exercise is on strategic, operational and tactical aspects of general military operations in the Korean Theater of Operations should defense of the peninsula become necessary.

"Our primary mission is providing a secure network for the military," said Staff Sgt. Darin Huwe, 115th training noncommissioned officer. "In South Korea we were able to work with classified, unclassified and coalition force networks."

The exercise provided the South Dakota Guardsmen with the opportunity to work with the U.S.

Army's 1st Signal Brigade, who enables joint and combined command, control, communications, computers and information management throughout United States Forces Korea and other areas of operation.

"Korea is a major hub for signal communications in the Army and they are testing several cutting edge technologies," said Capt. Bracken Robinson, 115th commander. "Working with the 1st Signal Brigade gave our Soldiers the opportunity to familiarize themselves with equipment that is not native to the South Dakota National Guard, yet we would use in a deployed environment."

The South Dakota Soldiers served in several locations throughout the Korean peninsula and trained on the latest technology in the world of communications.

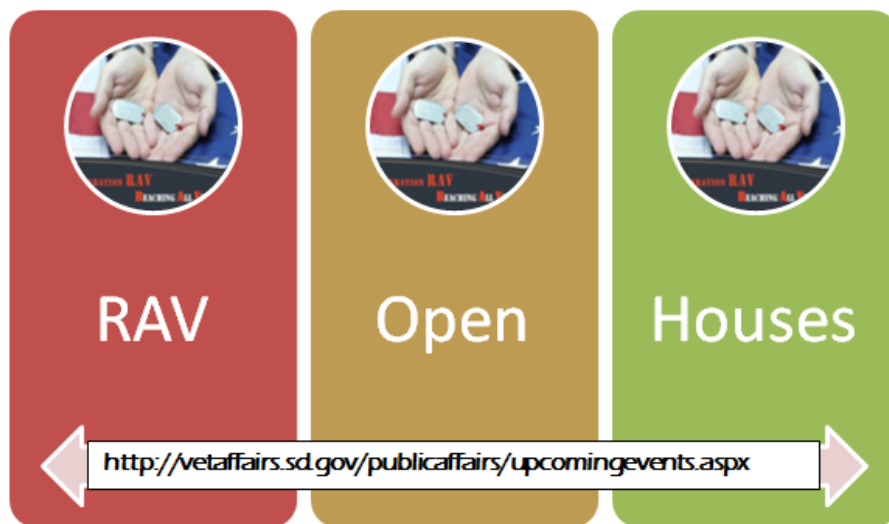
"It was great to not only get our hands on new equipment, but to see different techniques we can implement with our equipment," said Huwe. "Traveling to Korea was a fantastic experience for all of us in the signal company and we're looking forward to applying the lessons learned from the exercise."



Upcoming Events

2014

Sept. 19—SFVAHCS Stand Down—Sioux Falls VFW (3601 S. Minnesota Avenue) 9:00 am
Sept. 19—National POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony—Sioux Falls Memorial Park—6:30 pm
Sept. 22—VABHHC Stand Down—Stand Down—Pine Ridge—10:00 am
Oct. 6—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—BHNC—9:00 am
Oct. 7—SDSU Veterans Combat Support Group—SDSU Student Union 065—6:00 pm
Oct. 17—Women Veterans Conference—Holiday Inn City Centre in Sioux Falls
Nov. 4—SDSU Veterans Combat Support Group—SDSU Student Union 065—6:00 pm
Dec. 2—SDSU Veterans Combat Support Group—SDSU Student Union 065—6:00 pm



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